

SC Restructuring Questions and Answers
August, 2003

Following is a suggestion submitted by one of the Office of Science (SC) staff and the SC response:

Suggestion: In light of the fact that the Office of Science is preparing to roll out its reorganization plan, I have a recommendation for your consideration which I believe will contribute to the overall betterment of the organization.

Historically, the Department's personal property management program has come under heavy scrutiny and criticism by outside audit entities and the media. Obviously, this has recently been the case, again. Much of the reason for the criticism has been the perception of weaknesses in the Departments' contractor oversight program. Department of Energy personal property assets represent a very significant investment of tax payer's dollars, and poor stewardship of these assets is highly visible and easily understood by the public.

It has been my experience that working closely with contractors in a true spirit of partnership provides great benefits and does result in improved contractor performance. However, it is my concern that personal property management is a contract administration function that cannot be accomplished at long distance. It is for this reason that I highly recommend the Office of Science consider maintaining a local personal property presence at its labs within the newly proposed organization.

Response: Phase 1 of the Office of Science restructuring addresses the roles, responsibilities, authorities, and accountabilities of the Office of Science organizational units. The personal property system is one of the functions/activities that is included in the Phase 1 analysis. Phase 1 establishes the Site Office Managers as the single point of contact and authority for the respective Office of Science laboratories. When Phase 1 is implemented, the Site Offices will complement their technical and business capabilities with support from the Office of Science Support Center. The Chicago Office, serving as the focus for providing technical and business support to all of the Office of Science, will be charged to work with the Oak Ridge Office and others as appropriate to support the needs of the Site Offices.

Phase 2 of the Office of Science restructuring, known as the re-engineering phase, will address the number and location of Office of Science staff needed for each specific technical and business management system. The objective of Phase 2 will ensure the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the Office of Science technical and business systems. It is during this phase of the project that we can best address the merits and feasibility of locating property management professionals at each of the site offices. This effort is just beginning and will be performed over the next one and a half years.

In a related matter, in May 2003, the Director initiated a review of the purchase card and personal property systems for each of the Office of Science laboratories. The results of these reviews are being used to identify issues concerning the effective operation of the purchase card and personal property systems at each of the Office of Science laboratories. The Site Office Managers will work with their respective laboratories, using these review results, to implement appropriate corrective actions and report back to me that these business systems are effective. Office of Science personnel property specialists are actively participating in these reviews. In addition, the Office of Science laboratories have been very cooperative in these reviews because they do understand the importance of having sound personal property systems. These personal property systems reviews are ongoing and planned for completion by the end of this year.